

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY
204 Jordan Hall

Dec. 15, 1961

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Dept. of Genetics
Stanford University
Palo Alto, Calif.

Dear Josh:

Please let your wife know that I found it a delightful party at your house and afterwards at Ming's, even if she was not always to be understood! And even the AIBS committee meeting may have accomplished something, thanks to you. I hope you get to send a note to Bronk, as suggested.

Perhaps you noticed the pessimistic appraisal of the possibilities for a long duration of any civilization, as expressed by von Hoerner in the current (Dec. 8, 1961) issue of Science. I think he would be right if he and others at our level elsewhere did not take the eugenics problem seriously, and early enough. I think it is a mistake to adopt a perfectionist attitude about this and to wait until we can do everything in an elegant fashion just the way we want to, because we may never get to be able to do so unless we use cruder methods first. There is no use giving in to people's prejudices, because their attitudes can be changed toward social problems, as many modern as well as some older lessons show. At any rate, someone should try to lead them in such directions.

I should be happy if you found I was mistaken in thinking that no serious test had been made of my proposal to study the effects of weightlessness by causing a person in a horizontal position, in a rubber suit, immersed in brine, to be rotated around his body axis. Did you know that when I tried to give my little paper on this subject (later published in Science) before the symposium on the biological uses of earth satellites, held in Washington in May, 1958, that the chairman, Otto Schmitt, refused to let me speak until I got him overruled by a vote of the whole meeting? He merely told me, without explanation, that the "committee" had decided against it, but the committee was actually himself. There had been a session reserved for contributed papers and there was plenty of time for my paper. I suspect that Schmitt prevented follow-up experiments along these lines being carried out, but I hope I am wrong. At any rate, I know that quite a number of people ~~there~~ ^{there and later} expressed themselves as interested in having such work done, and I still think it would be useful even though we have come to the period where weightlessness can be tried out directly. Because it may prove to be a method of pre-screening people for free-fall condition, and also for studying various physiological reactions under such conditions, without leaving the laboratory.

Again with much appreciation of your and your wife's hospitality,

Yours sincerely,



H. J. Muller

HJM:slh